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REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-16, 18-31, 33-46, and 48-67 are now pending in this application for which applicant seeks reconsideration.

Amendment

A more descriptive title has been provided, and the Abstract has been amended to conform to US patent practice. Claims 2, 17, 32, and 47 have been canceled. Claims 1, 3, 6, 8, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25, 31, 33, 36, 38, 46, 59, 62, and 63 have been amended. Specifically, independent claim 1 has been amended to incorporate now canceled claim 2, independent claim 16 has been amended to incorporate now canceled claim 17, independent claim 31 has been amended to incorporate now canceled claim 32, and independent claims 46, 62, and 63 have been amended to incorporate now canceled claim 47. Claims 3, 6, 8, 18, 21, 23, 33, 36, and 38 have been placed in independent form. Claim 25 has been amended to depend solely from claim 23, and claim 59 has been amended to improve its form.

No new matter has been introduced.

Art Rejection

Claims 1-67 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by Owa (USP 6,348,971). Applicant traverses this rejection because Owa would not have disclosed at least A) the attribute judging and re-executing features set forth in independent claims 1, 3, 16, 18, 31, and 33, B) the delimiter sheet insertion feature set forth in independent claims 6, 21, and 36, C) the paper supply command feature set forth in independent claims 8, 23, and 38, D) the different transmission feature set forth in independent claim 46, 62, and 63, and E) the sheet insertion, non-insertion/insertion inhibiting features of independent claims 52, 59-61, and 64-67.

A

Claims 1, 3, 16, 18, 31, and 33 call for first executing an image process (e.g., color rip S2301, S3102 (Figs. 30, 34) or rip with a predetermined resolution S2401, S2501 (Figs. 31, 32))

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on all the image data of the input group, and thereafter judging (e.g., S2302, S2402, S2502, S3103) whether each of the image data of the input group of data belongs to a particular printing attribute. If it is judged as affirmative or negative, then the same or different image process is re-executed (e.g., S2304, S2404, S2504, S3109), based on the judgment. Thereafter, the processed image data are output to the respective selected image forming apparatuses.

Owa discloses a printing system that selects an optimum printer, among different printers connected to a host computer (see column 1, lines 8-10), for each print page. See column 2, lines 6-10. Specifically, in Owa, the host computer has a print data generation system 21 that includes print data generation means 22 for generating print data, user information detection means 23 for detecting and retaining user information for each print page based at least on specified print contents (user print conditions and document features), and a printer state management table for storing and managing the printer state of printers 31a-31c, and printer selection means 25 for selecting a printer appropriate for printing each print page based on the printer state of each printer 31a-31c and the user information. See Fig. 7 and column 3, lines 16-27.

In Owa, the print data generation means 22 converts each print page into print data so that it is printed at an appropriate printer (see column 3, lines 46-48). If the document 30 contains color and monochrome print pages, the printer selection means 25 sorts the pages into a color print page group 30a and a monochrome print page group 30b so that the color printer 31a prints the color print page group 30a and the monochrome printer 31c prints the monochrome print page group 30b. See column 3, lines 52-67. In Owa, however, the print data generation means 22 merely converts print pages into print data, while the printer selection means 25 sorts the document 30 into the color print page group 30a and the monochrome print page group 30b, and then printing the color print page group 30a at the color printer 31a and the monochrome print page group 30b at the monochrome printer 31c.

The examiner asserts that the re-executing feature corresponds to printing color image data on the color printer. Applicant disagrees because the claims call for executing the image processing before outputting to the image forming apparatuses (e.g., printers). Neither the

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printing process nor the outputting process nor print data generation means 22 correspond to the re-execution of image processing. Owa does not disclose or teach executing the same image processing for all the image data of the input group, then judging whether each of the image data falls within one printing attribute, and then re-executing the image data depending on the judgment. Accordingly, applicant submits that Owa would not have anticipated or taught the claimed invention.

B

Claims 6, 21, and 36 call for issuing a command instructing supply of delimiter paper to least one of the first and second image forming apparatuses, at at least one portion of the first and second groups of image data where printing attributes are to be switched. In other words, one of the image forming apparatuses not only prints the image data, it also inserts a sheet that corresponds to each page being printed by the other image forming apparatus.

The examiner argues that Owa's user printer condition input section for inputting attributes relating to paper supply corresponds to this aspect of the invention, relying on Owa's Fig. 3, column 4, lines 20-52 and column 6, lines 6-27, and columns 8-9. Applicants disagree because none of the passages identified by the examiner disclose or even remotely suggest the claimed delimiter paper insertion feature set forth in claims 6, 21, and 26. Accordingly, applicant submits that Owa would not have anticipated or taught the claimed invention.

C

Claims 8, 23, and 38 call for issuing a paper-supply command to at least one of the first and second image forming apparatuses so that a predetermined number of recording sheets corresponding to one of the first and second groups of image data output to the other of the first and second image forming apparatuses are supplied to the one image forming apparatus, at at least one portion of the first and second groups of image data where printing attributes are to be switched.

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Again, the passage identified by the examiner, Owa's column 13, lines 15-52, is completely silent regarding feeding sheets corresponding to the pages that are printed by the other of the first and second image forming apparatuses. Accordingly, Owa would not have anticipated or taught the claimed invention.

D

Claims 46, 62, and 63, which incorporate claim 47, call for transmitting image data of the group to be transmitted to the first image forming apparatus with a resolution suitable for the first image forming apparatus, and separately transmitting image data of the group to be transmitted to the second image forming apparatus with a resolution suitable for the second image forming apparatus. In other words, the transmission resolution is set separately for the image data sent to the first and second image forming apparatuses. The examiner has not addressed this aspect of the invention. Applicant submits that these claims define over Owa because Owa does not disclose or teach at least the features outlined above.

E

Claims 52, 59-61, and 64-67 call for an insertion mode in which the sheets having the first attribute are formed on sheets from a first feeding unit while sheets from another feeding unit are inserted into pages at positions corresponding to the sheets having the second attribute. For the same reason set forth in section B and C above, applicant submits that these claims patentably define over Owa.

Further, these claims call for a non-insertion mode in which, while the sheets having the first attribute are formed on sheets from the first feeding unit, inhibiting insertion of sheets from the another feeding unit into the pages at the positions corresponding to the image data of the group of image data having the second attribute. Owa also does not disclose or teach this aspect of the invention. The present claims thus further distinguish over Owa within the meaning of § 102 and § 103.

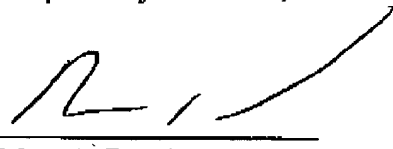
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Conclusion

Applicant submits that claims 1, 3-16, 18-31, 33-46, and 48-67 patentably distinguish over Owa and are in condition for allowance. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicant urges the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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